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ABSTRACT

This study is concerned with 1) citizens' opinions about the legitimacy of a campus disturbance and their attitudes about campus dissent generally, 2) the background factors which influence urban citizens' attitudes about campus dissent, and 3) the beliefs about campus life associated with attitudes about campus dissent. The major sample in the study included 254 Twin Cities area citizens. Most citizens did not consider a week long campus disturbance to be a legitimate form of social protest. However, citizens with more favorable attitudes about campus dissent were more apt to consider this campus disturbance a legitimate social protest. Attitudes about campus dissent were heavily related to attitudes about campus freedom of expression and beliefs about campus life.
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Urban Citizens' Opinions about a Campus Disturbance
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In May 1972, following the President's decision to mine Hai Phong harbor, the University of Minnesota erupted in a serious campus disturbance. The ensuing demonstrations and blockades of streets had the potential to polarize "town" and "gown". One factor which influenced citizens' opinions about this disturbance was their attitudes about campus dissent. We would expect that citizens with more positive attitudes about campus dissent would consider this disturbance a legitimate act of social protest.

Attitudes about campus dissent are both a dependent and an independent variable. These attitudes are related to citizens' opinions about the legitimacy of specific campus disturbances and these attitudes are influenced by other social and psychological variables. If changes in citizens' attitudes about campus dissent are to be effected, more information is needed about both the predictive value of differences in these attitudes and the factors influencing these attitudes.

Most of the research on citizens' attitudes about campus dissent has employed polling methods, and the findings are useful for descriptive generalizations. Support for college protestors among non-college people of all ages has been found to be quite low. Blacks and, more generally, college alumni, the young and the relatively well-educated have been found to be most in support of campus dissent (Spasch, 1969). Regardless of age or whether they attended college, citizens who supported liberal candidates for president were more likely to condone protests than those who supported conservative candidates (Spasch, 1969).

The present research has three areas of concern: (1) To ascertain the relationship between urban citizens' attitudes about campus dissent and their opinions about the legitimacy of a subsequent campus disturbance; (2) To ascertain those demo-social, experiential and attitudinal factors which influence urban citizens' attitudes about campus dissent; and (3) To ascertain the organization of beliefs about campus life which are associated with differences in urban citizens' attitudes about campus dissent.

Method

Samples

A sample of 373 citizens (heads of households) was randomly selected from city directories of Minneapolis, St. Paul, and all immediate suburbs, except three which contained less than 1% of the total population of the area. A comparison of the demographic characteristics of the sample with the 1970 census figures for the Twin Cities metropolitan area revealed a slight under-representation of females and students in the sample.

The first questionnaire was completed by 68% (N = 254) of the citizens. Most (71%) were males, mean age was 44 years, and the range was from 19 years to 82 years. A majority (69%) were married, a few (17%) were single, and the rest were either divorced (6%), widowed (7%), or separated (1%). Some (19%) citizens were high school graduates, some (16%) had attended business or trade schools, some (22%) had attended college, and some (20%) were college graduates. About equal percentages were employed in managerial positions (22%) or as skilled workers (20%). Some described their occupations as professional (15%), and a few said they were in sales (8%), or in semi-skilled (9%) and unskilled jobs (6%). Very few were retired (3%), and still fewer (1%) were students. A large percentage of the sample were Democrats (40%), while the rest were either Independents (28%)

or Republicans (25%). The size of the families of the people in the sample varied from no children to 13 children. About 5% had children who graduated from the University of Minnesota, 4% had children who graduated from other colleges, and 6% had children attending the University. Most (67%) respondents never attended the University; 28 were graduates of the University; 19 of them received a bachelor's degree, and 7 received advanced degrees. Only 7% of the respondents were ever employed at the University, while 30% had friends or acquaintances employed at the University; 11% of them said members of their families were employed at the University.

The 254 citizens who completed the first questionnaire received the second questionnaire about one week after a week of serious campus demonstrations (May 1972). Approximately four weeks had elapsed since most of the citizens had completed the first questionnaire. About 68% ($N = 173$) of the original sample of citizens completed the second questionnaire. A comparison of their socio-demographic characteristics with those of the non-respondents revealed only two significant differences between the two groups: Respondents were slightly older and had slightly more University-related experiences.

Questionnaires

The first questionnaire asked about the respondent's background: Age, sex, education, occupation, marital status, political affiliation, and type of educational or work relationships with the University. Respondents indicated the number of times (never, once or twice, a few times, several times, many times) they had each of 12 University-related experiences. Experiences included attendance at campus classes; sports events; and lectures; visiting University hospitals; talking to students, faculty and/or staff. Alpha (Cronbach, 1951), an internal consistency estimate for the 12 items was .83.

Subjects completed a measure of general social alienation (Srole, 1956). Internal consistency of this scale was adequate ($\alpha = .70$). They also completed a campus freedom of expression scale (Biggs and Vaughan, 1971; Biggs, Vaughan, and Donart, 1971) which contained questions about the freedom of students and faculty to express their opinions and to sponsor controversial lectures on campus. Internal consistency of this scale was also adequate ($\alpha = .79$). Respondents reported whether they thought 25 descriptive beliefs about University life were very true, probably true, undecided, probably false, or definitely false. Items dealt with University students, faculty, and administrators as well as University policies.

Respondents completed an eight-item measure of their attitudes about campus dissent (Biggs and Vaughan, 1971; Biggs, Vaughan, and Donart, 1971). They reported if they favored or were opposed to the goals and tactics of student activists in different situations. Goals included civil rights and anti-war activities, as well as provision of birth control information to students. Methods included lectures, sit-ins, meetings, picketing, and occupying buildings. Internal consistency of these items was adequate ($\alpha = .82$).

The second questionnaire used in this study had questions about the legitimacy of a May 1972 campus disturbance. Respondents indicated on a five-point scale if they thought the demonstrations were legitimate acts of protest, if the demonstrators were only interested in creating disruptions, if the people arrested in the demonstrations should be treated like law breakers, if law enforcement officials were as responsible for the violence as were the students, and if the University officials should have closed the University during the demonstrations. They also reported what percentage of the anti-war demonstrators were not students, and what percentage of students at the University were in agreement with the anti-war demonstrators.

Statistical Analyses

Multiple regression analysis and chi square were used to observe relationships between experiences, social attitudes, and background characteristics of citizens, and their attitudes about campus dissent. Multiple regression analysis and chi square were also used to ascertain beliefs about campus life related to differences in attitudes about campus dissent. In some multiple regression analyses, we constructed dummy variables (Suits, 1952) to handle categorical data. Finally, we computed Pearson product-moment correlations between citizens' attitudes about campus dissent and their subsequent interpretations of a campus demonstration.

Results

The results of the second questionnaire are presented in the table in terms of the percentage of citizens agreeing with the statements.

Insert Table Here

The table shows that 65% of the citizens did not think the May 1972 campus disturbance was a legitimate act of protest against the Vietnam war, and an even larger number (72%) thought the demonstrators were concerned with nothing more than creating disruption and chaos. A majority (77%) thought that the persons arrested in the demonstrations should have been treated like other law breakers and given no special favors. Only 17% thought that law enforcement officials were as responsible for the violence as were the students, and still fewer (11%) thought officials should have closed the University during the demonstrations. The typical citizen thought that about 36% of the participants in the demonstrations were not students and that only 36% of the students at the University were in

agreement with the actions of the protesters.

Urban citizens' attitudes about campus dissent were related to their opinions about the legitimacy of the May campus disturbance. The more favorable were citizens' attitudes about dissent, the more they believed the campus disturbance was a legitimate act of protest ($r = .42, p \leq .01$), and the more they believed that law enforcement officials were as responsible for campus violence as were students ($r = .49, p \leq .01$). The more negative their attitudes about campus dissent, the more they believed that many of those involved in the campus disturbance were concerned with nothing more than creating disruptions ($r = .47, p \leq .01$), and the demonstrators should have been treated like any other law breakers ($r = .50, p \leq .01$). Urban citizens' attitudes about campus dissent were not related to their opinions about whether University officials should have closed the University during the demonstrations ($r = -.00$).

Socio-demographic characteristics of urban citizens such as age, attending the University, sex, education level, occupation level, size of family, and working for the University, had very little relationship to their attitudes about campus dissent ($R^2 = .26$); only 7% of the variance in urban citizens' attitudes about campus dissent can be explained by the variance in these socio-demographic characteristics. Among these variables, age makes the largest relative contribution (4% of the variance) to explaining differences in urban citizens' attitudes about campus dissent. Older citizens were apt to have more negative attitudes about campus dissent. We divided the citizens into three groups using scores on the measure of attitudes about campus dissent (top 20% - favorable attitudes; middle 60% - moderate attitudes; and bottom 20% - unfavorable attitudes). Democrats, Independents, and Republicans differed in their attitudes about campus dissent ($\chi^2 = 12.07, p \leq .05$). About 59% of the citizens with most

favorable attitudes about campus dissent were Democrats.

The relationship between the number of University-related experiences urban citizens have had and their attitudes about campus dissent was negligible ($R = .29$). About 8% of the variance in citizens' attitudes about campus dissent can be accounted for by the variance in their number of University-related experiences. Among these variables, the number of campus concerts, plays, and lectures attended by citizens makes the largest relative contribution (4% of the variance) to explaining differences in urban citizens' attitudes about campus dissent. Urban citizens who attended more plays, concerts, and lectures on campus were more favorable toward campus dissent.

Urban citizens' attitudes about campus freedom of expression and their feelings of general social alienation were moderately related to their attitudes about campus dissent ($R = .46$). About 21.6% of the variance in urban citizens' attitudes about campus dissent can be accounted for by differences in these attitudes. However, almost all of this variance (21.5%) was accounted for by differences in citizens' attitudes about campus freedom of expression. As might be expected, citizens who were more liberal about campus freedom of expression were more favorable toward campus dissent. Citizens with liberal, moderate and conservative attitudes about campus freedom of expression differed considerably in their attitudes about campus dissent ($X^2 = 63.51, p \leq .01$). 51% of the citizens with most liberal attitudes about campus freedom of expression had the most favorable attitudes about campus dissent. However, 44% of the citizens had moderate attitudes about campus freedom of expression and moderate attitudes about campus dissent.

Urban citizens' beliefs about University life were moderately related to their attitudes about campus dissent ($R = .44$). About 20% of the variance in

their attitudes about campus dissent can be explained by differences in their beliefs about campus life. Differences among citizens as regards to whether they believed many subversive activities were going on at the University make the single largest contribution (7% of the variance) to explaining differences in their attitudes about campus dissent. More of the urban citizens with unfavorable attitudes about campus dissent thought many subversive activities were going on at the University ($\chi^2 = 19.67, p \leq .01$), professors tried to influence students' political and social viewpoints ($\chi^2 = 15.05, p \leq .01$), black students had a great deal of influence at the University ($\chi^2 = 14.92, p \leq .01$), and militant student radicals had considerable power at the University ($\chi^2 = 12.88, p \leq .05$).

Discussion and Conclusion

Most urban citizens did not consider the May campus demonstration to be a legitimate form of social protest. The typical citizen thought that most of the protestors were students, but that most students did not agree with their actions. By way of contrast, Bernhart and Strong (1972) reported that 92.1% of their sample of students thought that the May demonstrations were a legitimate means of protest and about half of the students said that they mildly or strongly agreed with the demonstrators. Thus, a majority of students thought the May campus disturbance was a legitimate form of social protest while most urban citizens did not agree. The reasons for this difference of opinion about the legitimacy of the May protest may be due to several factors. First, protest situations communicate a combination of fear and appeal components and students may perceive far more appeal in the protest than did the citizens. Second, protest is considered legitimate if protestors appear to be credible in terms of "folk" concepts of social protest. These urban citizens probably don't view students as credible social protestors or powerless individuals who have been treated unjustly. Finally,

Turner (1969) warned, "Interpreting public disorders as social protest is an unstable and precarious condition. It requires an optimally balanced set of conditions and is difficult to maintain over an extended period of time."

During the early days of the 1969 campus demonstration which lasted approximately a week, more urban citizens may have interpreted the demonstration as a legitimate form of social protest.

The results show that citizens' socio-demographic characteristics had almost no relationship to their attitudes about campus dissent. However, a majority of citizens with most favorable attitudes about campus dissent were Democrats. Also, our findings indicate that urban citizens' amount of University-related experiences have a negligible relationship to their attitudes about campus dissent. Finally, urban citizens' attitudes about campus freedom of expression but not their feelings of social alienation were moderately related to their attitudes about campus dissent. It is not surprising to us that citizens' attitudes about campus freedom of expression were so useful in explaining differences in their attitudes about campus dissent. Dissent tests the limits of freedom of expression and raises the issue of where to set limits on student behavior. Still, it should be noted that citizens' attitudes about campus freedom of expression explain relatively little of the variance in their attitudes about campus dissent. Many other factors are important.

The profile of beliefs which distinguish between citizens with favorable, moderate, and unfavorable attitudes about campus dissent describes important differences in how these three groups interpret campus life. Citizens with favorable and unfavorable attitudes toward campus dissent disagreed as to whether black students, professors, student radicals, and possibly even Communists have considerable power on campus. This finding suggests that many citizens with

unfavorable attitudes may not attribute the causes of campus dissent to students. Thus, many citizens with unfavorable attitudes about campus dissent view the campus with suspicion and seem to think that students are hapless victims of a number of external sources of influence.

Table
Urban Citizens' Opinions about
May 1972 Campus Disturbance

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. The recent demonstrations were a legitimate act of protest	7.1%	19.6%	0.3%	35.5%	20.0%
2. Those involved in the recent demonstrations were concerned with nothing more than creating chaos.	35.3%	37.1%	15.0%	10.2%	0.6%
3. Those arrested in the demonstrations should be treated like law breakers.	43.1%	34.1%	10.0%	9.0%	5.0%
4. Law enforcement officials were as responsible for the violence as were the students.	5.4%	11.4%	14.5%	34.3%	34.3%
5. Officials should have closed the University during the recent demonstrations.	7.4%	8.4%	15.7%	41.5%	31.9%

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